

## KEY FINDINGS AND SUBCOMMITTEE OPTIONS

### *Wildlife Resources Commission - Conservation Education*

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#### I. KEY FINDINGS BY FISCAL RESEARCH

**1) Educational programming and education centers are not specifically part of WRC's Mission or Statement of Purpose (G.S. 143-239).**

“...the function, purpose, and duty of which shall be to manage, restore, develop, cultivate, conserve, protect, and regulate the wildlife resources of the State of North Carolina, and to administer the laws relating to game, game and freshwater fishes, and other wildlife resources enacted by the General Assembly...”

- However, according to WRC, “the Commission cannot meet its stated purpose without a comprehensive program that ensures public understanding and commitment to the wise use and conservation of North Carolina’s wildlife resources and their habitats.” (pg. 4).
- WRC’s three Wildlife Education Centers have all been built since 1998 using funds available to the Commission (i.e. no General Obligation debt or General Fund capital funds).

**2) Conservation Education utilizes over \$2.1 million in State funds and \$430k from Federal funds annually. Of the \$2.1 million, \$778,046 is General Fund appropriation.**

**FY 2011-12 Projected Revenue for Wildlife Education**

Source of Funds	Amount of Funds
General Fund Appropriation	\$778,046
License Revenue	\$1,182,969
Other Revenue (sales of educational, wildlife products, etc.)	\$179,622
BOW Workshop Fees	\$25,000
Federal Grants (Aquatic Education Grant)	\$430,000
Total Revenues	\$2,595,364

- Federal funds match eligible State funds 3:1; not all State funds are matched 3:1.
- For the Continuation Review, the FY 2011-12 budget eliminated \$778,821; this was an estimate of the amount of WRC’s new General Fund appropriation that would be allocated to Conservation Education.

## II. FUNDING OPTIONS

- 1) **Provide \$778,821 recurring in funding (i.e. continue the program as is)**
- 2) **Provide a reduced level of funding (non-recurring or recurring)**

### Reducing or Eliminating Funding

Reducing or eliminating General Fund support for Conservation Education funding may result in program reductions or Wildlife Education Center closures.

“If appropriated funding for the Wildlife Education program were discontinued, the Commission would be forced to reallocate a significant amount of license receipts in order to maintain the current level of services.” (pg. 2)

If license receipts were to become insufficient, the Commission would have to consider “other drastic measures” including:

- Closing the three Wildlife Education Centers (~230,000 visitors)
- Eliminating workshops for active teachers and student teachers (~2,000 educators trained)
- Eliminating distance-learning programs (~2,600 students served through 120 programs)
- Eliminating facilitated youth hunts and wildlife skills programs (~2,5500 participants)
- Reducing participation in events such as the State Fair, Mountain State Fair, National Hunting and Fishing Day, and youth group programs

### Fees

WRC can charge fees for Conservation Education programming but the Federal government would consider that income as “program revenue,” which would offset federal funds. However, federal funds are provided for aquatic education, not specifically for the Wildlife Education Centers and Conservation Education related activities. These funds may be able to be matched with other WRC activities.

- 3) **Provide no funding for FY 2012-13**

See Funding Option #2

## III. OTHER OPTIONS

- 1) **WRC suggested that the NCGA encourage local school systems to reinstate Hunter Education and fishing classes in Physical Education and Agricultural Education classes.**

The NCGA generally leaves curriculum decisions to the State Board of Education.

- 2) **The NCGA could add education to the WRC’s statement of purpose.**

By adding education to WRC’s statement of purpose or otherwise officially sanctioning educational programming, the NCGA would clarify its intent that educational programming continue.

- 3) **The NCGA could add reporting requirements related to Conservation Education activities.**